Developing Knowledge and Skills for Aspiring Educational Leaders that address Best Practices in Classroom Assessment and Instruction: An NCPEA Course Module[*]

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Abstract

This is an Instructional Module for a course entitled Assessment and Instruction for Educational Leaders addresses classroom assessment and the evaluation of instruction. The goal of this course is to help aspiring educational leaders to develop teacher observation and evaluation skills, better understand the construction of teacher generated formative and summative student assessment instruments, and refine collaborative and leadership skills. The learning activities and candidate produced artifacts are experiential and focus on performance-based tasks. This module also includes a reading list and 3 rubrics that are used to guide instruction and assess the candidate's leadership knowledge and skills.

1 *The International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, Volume 6, Number 1, January - March, 2011, ISSN 2155-9635

NOTE: This Instructional Module has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of education administration. In addition to publication in the Connexions

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Content Commons, this module is published in the *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*,[1] Volume 6, Number 1 (January - March, 2011), ISSN 2155-9635. Formatted and edited in Connexions by Theodore Creighton and Brad Bizzell, Virginia Tech.

2 Introduction

The focus of this face-to-face instructional module covers the content of one of the courses that our graduate students take as part of the Master Degree Program in Educational Leadership here at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The course entitled *Assessment and Instruction for Educational Leaders* addresses classroom assessment and the evaluation of instruction. Aspiring school leaders in this course begin to develop and refine their abilities to:

- identify and to facilitate the implementation of best practices in classroom instruction
- develop teacher observation and evaluation skills
- apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills in the areas of classroom level formative and summative assessment planning and creation as integrated components of instruction
- assist the teaching staff in developing sound classroom assessment tools
- report and interpret classroom level and standardized test results in a manner that informs instruction and the learner

The candidates can then use these newly acquired skills to make evaluative judgments regarding a school's and individual teacher's strengths and weaknesses in the areas of assessment and pedagogy. While enrolled in this course, students also begin to develop the leadership knowledge and skills that are necessary to lead individual teachers, teams of teachers, and the entire school into new directions that will result in improvements to classroom level assessment of student performance and instructional practices. The reading list for this course includes books and several articles which address best practice instructional strategies, "walk through" teacher observations, effective educational leadership strategies, and the creation of valid and reliable classroom assessments.

This course, like all other courses in our Master Degree in Educational Leadership program is standards based and follows the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership for Principals, Superintendents, Curriculum Directors, and Supervisors. Specifically, the content, goals and objectives, and learning activities of this course are based on the following ELCC standards: (*http://www.npbea.org/ELCC/ELCCStandards%20_5-02.pdf*[2])

2.0: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by promoting a positive school culture, providing an effective instructional program, applying best practice to student learning, and designing comprehensive professional growth plans for staff.

2.2 Provide Effective Instructional Program

2.2a Candidate demonstrates the ability to facilitate activities that apply principles of effective instruction to improve instructional practices and curricular materials.

2.2b Candidate demonstrates the ability to make recommendations regarding all of the following: the design, implementation, and evaluation of a curriculum that clearly and fully accommodates learners' diverse needs.

2.2c Candidate demonstrates the ability to use and promote technology and information systems to do all of the following: enrich curriculum and instruction, monitor instructional practices, and provide staff the assistance needed for improvement.

2.3 Apply Best Practice to Student Learning

2.3a Candidate demonstrates the ability to assist school personnel in understanding and applying best practices for student learning.

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[1] http://www.ncpeapublications.org
[2] http://www.npbea.org/ELCC/ELCCStandards%20_5-02.pdf

2.4 Design Comprehensive Professional Growth Plans

2.4a Candidate presents design evidence or demonstrate an ability to implement professional development programs meeting all of these criteria: well-planned, context-appropriate, based on reflective practice and research on student learning consistent with the school vision and goals.

2.4b Candidate demonstrates the ability to use all of the following strategies to form comprehensive professional growth plans with teachers and other school personnel: observations, collaborative reflection, and adult learning strategies.

2.4c Candidate develops and implements personal professional growth plans that reflect a commitment to life-long learning.

3 Performance Based Learning Activities and Student-generated Artifacts:

3.1 I. Classroom Student Assessment Analysis (General Description)

The purpose of this assignment is to provide the candidates with the opportunity to practice collecting, examining and analyzing actual examples of teacher-made and text-book generated classroom tests to determine the extent that these classroom level assessment items adequately address relevant state-established content standards. To assist the candidates in their efforts to collect and analyze these assessment materials, they can choose from a variety of course instructor provided tools (please see Appendix A) such as; The Nature of Evidence Worksheet, Checklist of Item Types Worksheet, and Task/Activity Design Worksheet in completing this assignment. Candidates are expected to work with an actual classroom teacher who has volunteered to participate by sharing classroom level assessments, daily planning documentation, observation data, and representative samples of student work. *N.B. names and other personal information of teachers who volunteer to participate as well as their respective students are kept confidential and are not part of the artifacts submitted to the course instructor.*

Click Here to Access Appendix A: Assignment Worksheets[3]

3.2 Classroom Student Assessment Analysis (Process)

Once the candidates have found a teacher volunteer, the candidate and teacher volunteer work together to select a unit of instruction that will be taught. Since statewide learning standards and assessments generally address the four core content areas (English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies), it is required that the unit of instruction selected by the teacher and the candidate focus on one of the four core content areas. As part of the information/data gathering process, the candidates are required to:

1. Collect lesson plans and assessments. It is expected that both informal and formal assessment techniques and instruments are collected, listed, described, and analyzed.
2. Collect samples of student work. Samples should include at least; one example of high quality work, one example of average performance, and one example of below average performance. Each collected sample should be analyzed in order to determine the extent quantity and quality of feedback that the classroom teacher provides her students.
3. Evaluate each form of classroom assessment and student work samples for appropriateness to the objective assessed. This should include both formal and informal types of assessment. It is also expected that the candidate interview the teacher to discuss informal assessment techniques and the extent the classroom teacher uses informal assessment results to modify instruction and inform the learner.
4. Evaluate all forms of assessment in the learning unit for alignment to the curriculum and learning standards. Special emphasis should be placed on the alignment of the course content to the appropriate cognitive level of the learning standards in order to assure academic rigor.

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[3]See the file at <http://cnx.org/content/m36640/latest/Appendix_A.pdf>

3.3 Classroom Student Assessment Analysis (Artifact Specifications)

1. Title Page
2. Table of Contents
3. Purpose of Activity:

- Explain why you are completing this activity and how this activity connects to the vision of your school and school improvement plan.
- How does this activity help you improve the school as a whole?
- How does this activity affect the observed teacher's performance in the classroom?
- Methodology:

- Provide a summary of the methodology you followed in the development this artifact. In other words, if I were an intelligent person but uninformed about the processes you have completed, I should be able to follow your methodology and duplicate what you have done.
- The methodology should reference the time frame in which each step was taken. (For example: In August 20**, I met with Teacher A to discuss the lesson she was teaching and the assessment techniques she utilized......)
- Description of Assessment Techniques:

- This section will describe and discuss the types of assessments the teacher utilized in her classroom. It should discuss both formal and informal types of assessments.
- Analyze the formal assessments utilized in the classroom for appropriateness to the desired objectives and alignment to curriculum and state standards. (do not forget to consider the academic rigor of the learning activities)
- Assessment Analysis:

- How do the classroom assessment practices align to high-stakes, standards-based assessments, like the state assessment?
- How does the design of the classroom assessments link to the state assessments?
- Is there teaching FOR the test rather than TO the test?
- Are there question formats found on the high-stakes, standards-based assessments also found on the teacher-generated classroom assessments?
- Are there both formative and summative assessments?
- Is there evidence that the teacher uses student performance assessment data to modify subject area content and/or instructional strategies?
- To what extent does the teacher's feedback on formal assessments and performance-based tasks provide the learner with constructive criticism?
- Are there both constructed-response and selected-response questions?
- Do the various forms of assessment follow the testing guidelines discussed in class? If not, is it appropriate?
- How does the teacher accommodate or modify the test for learners with additional/special needs?
- Conclusions and Recommendations for Teacher:

- How can the classroom assessment practices be refined to better prepare the students for high-stakes, standards-based assessments established and administered at the state level?
- What other suggestions and/or recommendations do you have to assist the teacher in her instructional and assessment practices?
- Appendix A: Copy of Teacher Lesson Plans and include a **brief** $1 - 2$ paragraph analysis of the plans:

- Are the teacher's lesson plans detailed to the extent that a qualified substitute teacher could use the plans to teach from?
- Is there evidence that shows a link between the lesson plans and the state's and/or local school district's instructional and content objectives?
- Is there evidence that indicates the extent that the level of academic rigor meets or exceeds the level of rigor required by the state's learning standards?

3.4 II. 10-Minute Teacher Observation (General Description)

To successfully fulfill the requirements of this artifact, candidates will conduct a minimum of 10 10-minute observations of two individual teachers. The purpose of this artifact is for candidates to develop and refine their observation skills in order to obtain a general impression of the state of teaching and learning in the school. In conjunction with required readings and class discussions of effective instructional methodologies, the candidates will have the opportunity to observe and judge the effectiveness of the various instructional practices used throughout the school. With the goal of improving classroom teaching practices, the candidates will also develop, refine, and practice their communication and collaboration skills as part of the classroom walk-through process.

3.5 10-Minute Teacher Observation (Process)

After having found two teacher volunteers, the candidate will carefully explain to them the purpose and frequency of the 10-minute walk-through observations. Each candidate will also assure the teacher volunteers that their confidentiality as well as that of their students will be respected. The candidate will do the following:

1. Submit original forms/notes made during and after each 10-minute classroom walk through. Please note that the candidates are encouraged to use and become familiar with the observation forms that are used in each of their respective schools.
2. For each of the classroom teachers observed, submit a reflection which contains:

- The grade level of the teacher observed
- The subject observed
- The experience level of the teacher observed
- A summary of the student orientation to work. (was a pattern observable)?
- A summary of the content taught during the observations and its alignment to state and/or local school district instructional goals and content standards. (was the content easy to determine)
- A summary of the context. (was there a pattern in the context observed such as the nature of the students' responses, cognitive style, and vocabulary)?
- Which instructional practices did you observe? Were there similarities between the instructional practices you observed and the examples of effective research-based instructional practices presented in our readings and discussions? Were they subject area and/or grade level specific?
- Curriculum Decision Points. What decisions did you observe? (did the teacher routinely assess student learning by "checking for understanding")
  · During the observed lessons, did the teacher modify the progression, pace, and/or content of the lesson based on informal assessment results?
  · Did the teacher create and maintain an atmosphere that was conducive to teaching and learning?
- To what extent did you observe teachers implementing knowledge and skills that were acquired through district sponsored professional development initiatives?
- If you were the principal in the building in which you observed these teachers and their classroom performance represented typical teacher behavior in the entire building, what would you do?

3.6 III. Oral Presentations of Class Reading Assignments

It is this writer's belief that school leaders never stop being teachers. In fact, an effective educational leader also serves as an instructor who is regularly occupied with instructing and informing her teaching staff, among other things, of research-based pedagogical strategies and interventions to expand their students' capacities to learn. With this in mind, candidates are required to make at least 3 presentations in class. Each of these presentations serves as a simulation of a "real life" faculty training/professional development session where the presenter plays the role of an educational leader and her class colleagues act as faculty members.

Throughout the semester, candidates are required to read a variety of books, articles, and case studies (please see the reading list in Appendix B). All candidates are required to select specific chapters, articles, and case studies for which they are to prepare presentations to their class colleagues that will include:

Click Here to Access Appendix B: Reading List[4]

1. An executive summary of the content of the reading selection.
2. The preparation and posing to the class thought-provoking questions.
3. The facilitation of a class discussion involving the concepts/issues addressed in the reading selection.
4. Create and use "teaching aids" that facilitate learning e.g. PowerPoint presentations, handouts, etc.

4 Conclusion

Since all of the learning activities and candidate produced course artifacts are all performance-based based, educational leadership degree candidates who complete this learning module will have developed a good understanding of the essentials of effective instructional practices, classroom assessment, and curriculum alignment. In addition, as a result of this instructional module's focus on experiential learning, the degree candidates will have also developed and refined the presentation, collaborative, and observational skills which are necessary for effective leadership.

The candidates' presentations and course artifacts are all assessed by the instructor using performance-based task rubrics. Please refer to the rubrics in Appendix C. It is important to note that an analysis of the rubric results at the whole class level can be used by the instructor as the basis for modifying course content and/or instructional strategies. At the individual student level, degree candidates can gain a better understanding of the strengths and limitations of their artifacts and performance.

Click Here to Access Appendix C: Task Rubrics[5]

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[4]See the file at <http://cnx.org/content/m36640/latest/Appendix_B.pdf>
[5]See the file at <http://cnx.org/content/m36640/latest/Appendix_C.pdf>